

*Congratulations on taking action  
to protect your child from inhalants.  
Bringing the suggested steps into  
your life will take commitment.  
The energy you invest will pay off  
in a healthier future for you and  
your children. Keep this booklet  
for future information and to order  
more booklets as your child gets older.*

***Thank you for your help keeping  
Massachusetts healthy.***

## MASSACHUSETTS INHALANT ABUSE TASK FORCE

### **A PARENT'S GUIDE:** Preventing Inhalant Abuse Among Children and Teens August 2010





**DEVAL L. PATRICK**  
GOVERNOR

**TIMOTHY P. MURRAY**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**JUDYANN BIGBY, MD**  
SECRETARY

**JOHN AUERBACH**  
COMMISSIONER

### **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02108-4619

Soon after teaching our children to cross the street, it's time to start protecting them from substance abuse. Parents are the most powerful teachers. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, a state agency, is pleased to provide you with guidance for children from ages 9 to 18. This booklet provides the most effective ways to prevent problems with inhalants or "huffing." Elementary, middle, and high school students are at risk, and few of them know the dangers.

Inhalants can be regular school, household, and office products that are sniffed for their mind-altering effects. They need to be taken very seriously, because they can cause life-long problems or death.

#### **This booklet will help you to:**

- Choose safer products for your home.
- Get information on how to teach about household, home repair, and other products.
- Tap into free resources to support your efforts to keep your children healthy.

#### **Consider these facts:**

- Children as young as nine have tried inhalants after hearing about them from friends or adults.
- Abuse may start as early as the third grade and peaks among eighth and ninth graders.
- A good place to start is by talking to young children about the importance of only eating or drinking things that have been given to them by trusted adults. It is important that they ask you before putting anything else in their bodies.
- Older youth may use inhalants with other drugs or when other drugs are not available.

Giving your children guidance can have a powerful influence on their choices. Be sure to be clear about the rules and what will happen if they break them. Do NOT share information with your children on specific inhalants or refer to them as drugs. **This booklet is for adults only.** It will help you teach your children to stay away from the dangers of inhalants.

To request other free pamphlets for yourself or information for youth on preventing inhalant, alcohol and other drug abuse, contact the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse. Visit [www.macclearinghouse.com](http://www.macclearinghouse.com) or call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: 1-617-536-5872). The Bureau of Substance Abuse Services of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health offers a range of services. Visit [www.mass.gov/dph/bsas](http://www.mass.gov/dph/bsas) for information on prevention, treatment and other resources.

























We are here to support all of your efforts to help keep your children healthy.

#### **Michael Botticelli**

Director  
Bureau of Substance Abuse Services  
MA Department of Public Health

# PARENTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW TO KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFER

Inhalants are ordinary school, household and office products that are inhaled or sniffed for their mind-altering effects. This chart will show you examples of inhalants and some of the safer products you can use in your school, home and office.

SOURCE OF INHALANT		PREVENTION STRATEGIES		
		USE "WATER-BASED" PRODUCTS	SUPERVISE USE OF SOLVENT BASED PRODUCTS	OTHER STRATEGIES
GENERAL SUPPLIES	Cements, glues			
	Typewriter correction fluid			Use correction tape
	Magic markers, dry erase markers			Use low odor markers
CLEANING SUPPLIES	Any product in an aerosol can			Use hand pumps instead of aerosol cans
	Aerosol air fresheners and deodorizers			Use solid air fresheners
	Computer cleaner (gas duster)			Use brush or canned carbon dioxide
GARAGE	Paints, varnishes, stains, paint thinner			
	Contact cement			
ART SUPPLIES	Rubber cement			
	Printing inks			
	Spray paints and clear finishes			
AUTO	Degreasers, spray lubricants, solvents, Freon®, brake fluid, gasoline, lacquers, lacquer thinners			
HEALTH & BEAUTY	Nail polish and nail polish remover, hair spray			Use pump hairspray
	Deodorants in aerosol cans			Use stick deodorants
COOKING SUPPLIES	Cooking spray			Use oil in a spray pump
	Whipping cream in aerosol cans, whipping cream cartridges (whippets)			Use whipped cream in a tub or make it from scratch

*The list of inhalants is always growing. For information on specific products or poisons call the Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention (Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island) at 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313).*



## Here's How You Can Help Prevent Inhalant Abuse

- **Teach kids to read and follow the directions for use on all product labels.** Let them know you read directions and see you follow them. Always open a window when you use products that suggest you use them in a well ventilated area.
- **Identify products that can be abused and treat them as poisons,** often they will be labeled "keep out of the reach of children" or "use in a well ventilated area." When in doubt, keep them in a safe place and be there if they need to be used by your kids.
- **Don't discuss specific products.** This may lead to curiosity and increased experimentation. Avoid making the connection that these products can be used as drugs and always stress that these products are dangerous poisons, toxins, and pollutants.
- **Be clear about the laws and your rules about inhalants, alcohol and other substances.** Let your child know what will happen if they break your rules. See page 11 for some related laws.
- **Talk to your school principal, teachers and health educators about safer products.**
- **Stay informed.** See page 13 for booklets on how to talk to your children or teens in the most powerful way at different ages. Visit [www.maclearinghouse.com](http://www.maclearinghouse.com) or call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: 1-617-536-5872) to order them. Adults can also visit [www.inhalantabusetraining.org](http://www.inhalantabusetraining.org) for guidance on teaching their children from pre-school to high school.

## Keep in Mind Why Youth Use Inhalants

- Inhalants are difficult to detect.
- Many children are not aware of how dangerous these products are.
- Inhalants take effect very quickly.
- Many adults are not aware of inhalants, so use may go unnoticed.

## Know the Dangers of Inhalant Use

- **Breathing these gases and vapors can cause brain, nerve, kidney and liver damage.**
- **Death can result from even one-time use.**
- **Some children have accidents, choke to death or have heart attacks.**
- **Inhalants can be addictive. Once used on a regular basis, it is hard to stop without special help.**

### If You Are Concerned That Your Child May Have Tried an Inhalant, Here Are Some Warning Signs to Look For:

- Empty product containers, especially butane lighters and aerosol cans.
- Chemical soaked bags, rags, gauze, or soft drink cans.
- Paint, gasoline, glue, or other strange odors.

### Some Health or Behavioral Signs of Inhalant Abuse Can Include:

- Unusual harsh breath odor
- A rash or blisters or soreness around the nose, mouth or on the lips
- Runny nose, sniffing and coughing
- Irritated or glazed eyes and dilated pupils
- Nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, hallucinations or seizures
- Uncontrolled laughter
- Agitation or sleepiness
- Extreme mood swings, increased irritability and anger or violent outbursts
- Showing off or displaying risky behaviors

*NOTE: Some of these may pass quickly or indicate another health problem. If you suspect your child may have used an inhalant, get them health care right away.*

### How to Talk to Your Child if You Suspect Inhalant Use

- Describe signs that have led you to be concerned.
- Tell your child how much you love him/her. Say how worried you are about him/her.
- Remind your child of his/her goals, such as being on a sports team or getting a part in a play.
- Explain that using inhalants or other drugs can seriously affect their development.
- Make it clear that you and the family will seek help.

### Help Is Available for Youth and Parents

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services supports outpatient counseling and residential programs for youth who are using inhalants and other substances. For information on programs, contact the Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline. Visit [www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com) or call 1-800-327-5050 (TTY: 1-888-448-8321).

Confidential help is available, 7 days a week, in many languages. Help may be available even if you do not have health insurance coverage.

### Paying for Services

Massachusetts is currently working to provide more state-funded services for families. For example, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health provides assistance with some outpatient and residential services. These are often called "treatment."

A sliding scale may be used to assess a family's ability to provide support for treatment. In addition, many insurance plans are required to offer coverage for treatment.

If your child has insurance, call your health plan or visit their website to get the information you need. If you need help getting health insurance, visit [www.mahealthconnector.org](http://www.mahealthconnector.org).

***For a step-by-step guide on getting your child into counseling, visit [www.maclearringhouse.com](http://www.maclearringhouse.com) or call 1-800-952-637 (TTY: 1-617-536-5872) and download or request "Alcohol and Other Drugs: Is Your Teen Using?"***



## WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU FIND A PERSON IN CRISIS FROM USING INHALANTS

- 1 Call 9-1-1.
- 2 Remain calm. Scaring or chasing the person may increase the risk of a heart attack.
- 3 Lay the person on his or her side to prevent choking on vomit.
- 4 Stay with the person until emergency help arrives.
- 5 Open windows to ensure that he or she gets fresh air.
- 6 Avoid distractions and try to keep the person from moving.

*For information on specific products or poisons, call the Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention (Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island) at 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313).*

## BEWARE OF THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF PRODUCTS IN YOUR HOME

One of the greatest challenges in trying to protect your children is that many of the most dangerous inhalants are easily accessible to children at home or school. That's why it's critical to be aware of the products you purchase for your home.

For example, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health asks the public to keep safety in mind when using computer gas dusters. Many are unaware that computer gas dusters can be extremely harmful. They are commonly used to blow dust and debris out of computers, keyboards and mice. This common school, office, and household product often contains a pressurized, odorless, flammable gas that can be poisonous when intentionally inhaled.

### THE WARNING LABEL OFTEN HIGHLIGHTS THIS DANGER:

Do not deliberately concentrate and/or inhale this product. You could instantly die, suffer brain damage or other dangerous and permanent health effects. To prevent accidental or intentional misuse or abuse, keep out of the reach of children and teens.

### To Learn More:

- Parents can learn what to say about inhalant use to children at different age levels at [www.inhalantabusetraining.org](http://www.inhalantabusetraining.org).
- For more information about inhalant abuse or how to talk to your children about other substance abuse, visit [www.maclearringhouse.com](http://www.maclearringhouse.com), call 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: 1-617-536-5872) or contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at [www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant](http://www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant).

ADULTS ONLY

## EXCERPTS FROM MASSACHUSETTS LAWS ABOUT INHALANT ABUSE

**Inhalant abuse is not just dangerous; it's a serious crime in Massachusetts. Here are some excerpts from Massachusetts Laws about Inhalant Abuse. It's important that you educate your children on the severe problems that trying inhalants can cause.**

### MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW CHAPTER 270 CRIMES AGAINST PUBLIC HEALTH

#### Section 18

##### **Substance Having Property of Releasing Toxic Vapors**

No person shall intentionally smell or inhale the fumes of any substance having the property of releasing toxic vapors, for the purpose of causing a condition of intoxication, euphoria, excitement, exhilaration, stupefaction, or dulled senses or nervous system, nor possess, buy or sell any such substance for the purpose of violating or aiding another to violate this section.

This section shall not apply to the inhalation of anesthesia for medical or dental purposes.

Whoever violates the provisions of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

Any person who is discovered by a police officer or special police officer in the act of violating this section may be arrested without a warrant by such police officer or special police officer, and held in custody, in jail, or otherwise, until a complaint is made against him for such offense which complaint shall be made as soon as practicable and in any case within twenty-four hours, Sundays and legal holidays excepted.

#### Section 19

##### **Glue or Cement; Sale to Minors; Smelling Deterrent Ingredients**

Any person who sells glue or cement to a minor shall require such minor to properly identify himself and write his name and address legibly in a permanently bound register. The seller shall keep such register available for police inspection for a period of six months after the last sale is recorded therein. No such glue or cement shall be sold to a minor unless it contains allyl isothiocyanate (oil of mustard) or some other equally effective and safe deterrent against smelling or inhaling the fumes of such glue or cement.

As used in this section, glue or cement shall mean any glue or cement that contains a solvent or chemical having the property of releasing toxic vapors.

Whoever violates the provisions of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

### MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW CHAPTER 90

#### Section 24D

Any person convicted of or charged with operating a motor vehicle with a percentage, by weight, of alcohol in their blood of eight one-hundredths or greater, or while under the influence of intoxicating liquor, controlled substance or the vapors of glue, may if such person consents, be placed on probation for not more than two years and shall, as a condition of probation, be assigned to a driver alcohol education program as provided herein and, if deemed necessary by the court, to an alcohol or controlled substance abuse treatment or rehabilitation program or to both, and such person's license or right to operate shall be suspended for a period of no less than forty-five nor more than ninety days.

*Visit [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov) for other penalties and updates.*

## RESOURCES AND PHONE NUMBERS

To prevent substance use, the most important steps are to set rules and talk to your children often. There are a number of resources available to guide you to help protect your children.

### Titles Available on Prevention

This and other titles are available free to the public. They can be requested by calling 1-800-952-6637 (TTY: 1-617-536-5872). You can also order or download at [www.maclearinghouse.com](http://www.maclearinghouse.com).

- Preparing Your Young Children for a Healthy, Drug-Free Future (for parents of 3rd-5th graders)
- Talking to Your Middle School-Aged Child about Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (Available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole)
- 7 Ways to Protect Your Teen from Alcohol and Other Drugs (Available in English and Spanish)
- Inhalants Poison Your Body (for youth)

### More Information and Inhalant Abuse Services

- Parents can learn what to say to children at different age levels about inhalant abuse at [www.inhalantabusetraining.org](http://www.inhalantabusetraining.org).
- Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline 1-800-327-5050 (TTY: 1-888-448-8321) or [www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com). Information and referrals to prevention and treatment programs.
- The Massachusetts Inhalant Abuse Task Force at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health [www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant](http://www.mass.gov/dph/inhalant). Additional resource materials can be downloaded.
- Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island 1-800-222-1222 (TTY: 1-888-244-5313). The Center can provide specific product information.

## LOCAL RESOURCES

For books, videos and effective programs to prevent inhalant and other substance use, visit the website or call the "Resource Center" at your local Massachusetts Regional Centers for Healthy Communities.

### Western Massachusetts Center for Healthy Communities

489 Whitney Ave., Second Floor, Holyoke, MA 01040  
1-413-540-0600 (TTY: 1-413-540-0348)  
[www.westernmasshealthycommunities.org](http://www.westernmasshealthycommunities.org)

### Central Massachusetts Center for Healthy Communities

44 Front St., Suite 280, Worcester, MA 01608  
1-508-438-0515 (TTY: 1-508-438-0518)  
[www.cmchc.org](http://www.cmchc.org)

### Northeast Center for Healthy Communities

1 Canal St., Entrance C, Lawrence, MA 01840  
1-978-688-2323  
[www.nc4hc.org](http://www.nc4hc.org)

### Regional Center for Healthy Communities (serving suburban Boston and Metrowest)

552 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 203,  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
1-617-441-0700 (voice and TTY)  
[www.healthier-communities.org](http://www.healthier-communities.org)

### Greater Boston Center for Healthy Communities (serving Boston, Chelsea, and Winthrop)

622 Washington St., Dorchester, MA 02124  
1-617-451-0049  
[www.masspreventioncenter.org](http://www.masspreventioncenter.org)

### Southeast Center for Healthy Communities

942 West Chestnut St., Brockton, MA 02301  
1-508-583-2350 (TTY: 1-508-583-2847)  
[www.preventionworks.org](http://www.preventionworks.org)